

## Testimony before the House Education Committee on House Bill 4264

*Mon 1/29*  
Good afternoon, Chairman Palmer and honorable committee members. I am William Coleman, General Superintendent of the Detroit Public Schools. First, let me thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of House Bill 4264. This is extremely important legislation that would afford Detroit Public Schools with the flexibility to offer a single-gender learning environment in a public school setting. Single gender educational programs have been available in Michigan's private schools for decades. It's time our state's public school children have the same options as their private school contemporaries.

Currently, the Detroit Public Schools offers a diversity of settings in which our students learn and excel. The District has a comprehensive foreign language immersion school for elementary students, five award-winning career and technical schools and themed high schools focused in areas such as health care, computer technology, fine arts, finance and aviation. Now, it is our desire to expand these choices by opening two single gender college preparatory high schools this fall. House Bill 4264 would provide us with the needed flexibility to do just that.

During the Spring of 2005, hundreds of parents flocked to informational sessions, where District officials formally announced plans to open two single-gender schools for the 2005-06 school year. However, they were disappointed to learn that it was ultimately decided to postpone those plans due to the threat of impending litigation by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). The District offered numerous compromises to address the ACLUs concerns and ensure its compliance with the provisions of Title IX, but to no avail. That is why I'm before you today requesting that the Legislature take a strong stance supporting the efforts of Detroit Public Schools to provide choice and innovation in learning for our students.

The demand for single gender educational settings in Detroit is overwhelming. We have not only garnered the support of parents, but, educators have also embraced this effort. You will undoubtedly hear from others throughout this hearing, representing interests from across the state, that recognize the importance of affording districts the ability to respond to unique student needs.

In March 2004, then U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige released proposed rules (34 CFR Part 106) to govern the establishment of single-gender educational programs in public school settings. These rules were proposed at the direction of Congress who instructed the Department in the *No Child Left Behind Act* (sections 5131(a)(23) and 5131 (c)) to issue guidance to school districts about how innovative single-gender schools and classes could participate in certain *No Child Left Behind* programs. While the Department continues to comb through over 5,000 comments submitted during the rule-

making process, compelling nationwide data has been generated demonstrating significant improvement in attendance, test scores, behavior and graduation rates among students enrolled in single-gender school settings.

These favorable results were highlighted in a 2005 report commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education (*Single-Sex Versus Co-education Schooling: A Systematic Review*) that reviewed 44 studies of quantitative and qualitative research on the issue. Many of these studies revealed that students at single-gender schools not only had superior academic achievement, but also had higher educational aspirations, more confidence in their abilities, and a more positive attitude toward academics, than did students at coed high schools.

New York City's single-gender public school initiative targeting at-risk students has yielded impressive results. Please consider the following:

- The Young Women's Leadership Academy in East Harlem placed 100 percent of its graduating classes of 2004 and 2005 into colleges. Its daily attendance was over 90 percent from 2002 to 2004. Its attendance rate averaged 8.7 percent higher than other schools in the New York City school system. Its high school dropout rate in 2003-04 was .08 percent.
- The Eagle Academy for Young Men in Manhattan was highlighted in *Newsweek* magazine for its accomplishments working with boys. It partners with many organizations and businesses to provide mentoring support for all its students. The results have been noteworthy. 97 percent of its student passed the 2005 New York State Regents exam in science, while 100 percent passed in math.

We believe that the Detroit Public Schools can replicate these successes.

Even in light of potential Title IX implications and impending threats of litigation, 223 public schools in the United States are offering gender-separate educational opportunities. 44 of those 223 schools are completely single-gender in format. Today, single-gender public schools are located in Indianapolis (IN), Cincinnati (OH), Baton Rouge (LA), Boston (MA), Philadelphia (PA), Chicago (IL), Greenville (SC), Minneapolis (MN), Phoenix (AZ), Portland (OR), Colorado Springs (CO), New York City, San Diego (CA), Washington, (DC,) Milwaukee (WI), Houston (TX), Seattle (WA), Louisville (KY), Hartford (CN), and Baltimore (MA) just to name a few. Also, the Atlanta Public Schools and other districts have plans to open single-gender schools this fall. This is a national movement that would greatly enhance the educational opportunities available to students in Detroit.

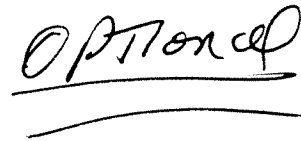
In closing, I want to again thank you for the opportunity to voice the District's support for House Bill 4264. In addition, I would like to thank Representative Lamar Lemmons and Chairman Brian Palmer for your leadership on this issue. We need the flexibility to provide parents and students with the educational options they desire and deserve.

Again, I urge you to support the passage of House Bill 4264. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W F Coleman III".

William F. Coleman, III  
General Superintendent  
Detroit Public Schools

The word "OPTIONED" written in a stylized, handwritten font, with a double horizontal line underneath it.

